

Testimony of
Matt Fleury, President & CEO of the Connecticut Science Center
Before the
Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
February 20, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, it is a pleasure and an honor to offer the perspective of the Connecticut Science Center for your consideration as you evaluate the State of Connecticut's spending priorities for the coming fiscal period.

For many years this committee has clearly distinguished between spending and investing. The taxpayers of Connecticut benefit from your strategic perspective in many ways. Cultural, educational and tourist institutions such as the Connecticut Science Center are grateful for your recognition of the quantitative and qualitative contributions that we make to the economy and the life of our state and its citizens.

Since opening in 2009, the Science Center has been enthusiastically embraced as Connecticut's center for families and students to experience science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in exciting new ways. Since we opened less than four years ago, the Science Center has served more than 1.1-million people, including those from every community in the state. Because of our educational services, 225,000 of our visitors have been school students on science-focused field trips, all created to directly support the State Department of Education's science curriculum framework.

Increasingly, the Connecticut Science Center is a vital resource for educators, providing intensive professional development to help teachers become more effective and engaging students in eye-opening, educational and motivating experiences with the critically important STEM fields. The Science Center is a valuable asset for education reform and to our economic future and that of our children. STEM careers pay 40% more than the average job, and Connecticut must sustain a well prepared workforce to maintain our economic edge through science and innovation. If our students are not interested in these fields to begin with, our decline as a technology economy will be dramatic. The Science Center is making a difference: 90% of students surveyed said that a Connecticut Science Center field trip increased their enthusiasm for science!

The Connecticut Science Center is also an economic driver today, with economic impact of over \$14-million. That's more than twenty times the amount of the State's annual investment. In fact, in tax revenues alone, the Science Center generates more than its State-appropriated support.

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Connecticut Science Center 2012 Economic Impact

Direct Economic Impact (CT Science Center activity, including Admissions)	\$ 7,907,754
Indirect Economic Activity Generated (excluding tax revenues generated)	\$ 5,541,297
Tax Revenues Generated	\$ 711,220
Total Economic Impact	\$ 14,160,271

*Methodology and data sources: Arts & Economic Prosperity IV, the Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural organizations and their agencies; Connecticut Science Center.

As a non-profit institution operating in a recessionary environment, the Science Center fully appreciates the difficult fiscal choices that you confront as elected leaders of our state. We have made difficult choices of our own, relying heavily on earned revenues, fundraising and cost controls to make ends meet, while providing a first class destination of which Connecticut can be proud. The State of Connecticut invested significantly in creating the Science Center and we have rallied a dedicated and generous group of business and academic leaders and philanthropists to accept the lion's share of the responsibility for carrying it forward. However, the State's continued partnership – in the form of a sustained investment – is essential.

At this difficult time when so many sacrifices must be made, the Science Center must stand as a testament to Connecticut's heritage of invention and leadership, and a living example of our commitment to a bright future for our children and our state.

As one of the state's leading tourist attractions, we would also like to comment concerning the state tourism marketing program. New research on the *Connecticut – Still Revolutionary* campaign indicates that this campaign is not only paying for itself, it's generating a significant financial return to the state. The \$15 million tourism campaign generated more than \$150-million in additional tourism spending, and significantly higher interest in visiting Connecticut. The Science Center itself has enjoyed an increase in out-of-state visitors. But we also have research showing that advertising impressions fade fast. Just as Connecticut disappeared from the tourism map before, it can happen again.

Our investment in tourism marketing last year created more than enough tax revenue to pay for itself, and built a platform for Connecticut to build on in the crucial summer ahead. In a budget significantly devoted to the one-way expense of holding pieces together, tourism is an investment that creates vitality and dollars, and education is a down payment on our future.